The Commonweal
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The Battle of the Hiring Halls

Daniel Seligman

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Italy's Civic Committees

Leo J. Wollemborg

VOLUME LI 15c NUMBER 16

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The Commonweal

WEEK BY WEEK

Forgotten Men

IN THE past seventeen years the goals in the nationwide struggle for social justice seem to have shifted. From a general objective of decent subsistence and working conditions the task has broken up into a whole series of special problems. The right to organize has been won in most parts of the country; some 16,000,000 workers now belong to effective unions. The forty-hour week is well established. The national minimum of 75 cents an hour and a more stringent ban on child labor have just gone into effect. Whatever may be thought of present methods, farmers are assured good prices for their various products. Savings are protected. Moreover, a serious start has been made toward providing nationwide social security. The picture, the country over, is much improved.

The time has now come when such a problem as that of enabling the four million American families who eke out a wretched existence on less than $1,000 a year (and others scarcely less underprivileged) must be attacked piecemeal, regionally and by occupations. How do 2,300,000 American urban families get along on less than one thousand inflated dollars? The cost in terms of juvenile delinquency, crime, communicable disease and expense to the community is all too plain.

But the situation of the American farm laborer is perhaps the most desperate of all the categories of the dispossessed. He is beyond the pale of the new minimum wage law; he is not yet organized; he often travels from harvest to harvest and then suffers months of enforced idleness without pay.

His situation has been greatly aggravated on the Pacific Coast and in the Southwest (which are producing more and more of the nation's foodstuffs, on a big commercial basis) by the importation of Mexicans, who work for lower wages. This procedure, which was stimulated by genuine wartime labor shortages, continues on a major scale. Last year, for instance, on the basis of an agreement negotiated between the two respective governments, some 118,575 Mexican nationals were imported for farm labor into the United States. Thousands more came here illegally. Yet there was no real shortage of farm labor here.

In both 1947 and 1948 only 30,000 Mexican farm workers came to this country legally, but close to 200,000 slipped over the border. The presence of this latter group was tolerated, but the fact that the men in question were at large, virtually on parole, made them even less capable of standing up to the bosses for decent wages or working and living conditions. The depressing effect of this human exploitation on the agricultural labor market in California, and elsewhere, has been extreme. The system is intolerable.

That explains the justice and the importance of the demand of the new National Farm Labor Union (AFL) that the President put a stop to this practice. The artificial labor shortage conjured up by the Associated Farmers of California and others does not bear examination. Both legal and illegal importation only does irreparable harm to United States' and Mexican farm workers. The profits of the growers in the Central, San Joaquin and other productive valleys must clearly give way before the human interests which are here at stake.

BY THE same token another principal demand made by the new farm workers' union must be granted. The provisions of the new minimum wage law should be extended to cover all farms employing more than four men. Such a provision is of the greatest importance as large-scale mechanization continues to increase. It may not be feasible to ban factories-in-the-fields by legislation; but at least these new places of employment should enjoy legal recognition for what they are. They should operate under the same restrictions as other factories. Their responsibilities for those whom they employ do not end when the short harvesting season is done.

In short, one sector in the national economy most urgently in need of attention is that of farm labor. No further agreements to import Mexican farm labor should be negotiated; those who are already here illegally should be decently re-

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• NEXT WEEK •

FRANCOIS MAURIAC writes of *The Christian and the World.*

"Let us admit, whether we are Right or Left, that we are terribly earthbound. We cling too hard to our ideas of Right and Left. . . . It is not at all uncommon nowadays to find Christians of the Right who have a bad conscience. . . . The Catholic of the Left or of the ultra-Left, on the contrary, finds it easier to produce edifying motives for his antipathies and hatreds and to confuse them with that hunger and thirst for justice which was blessed on the Mount."

patriated. Our own farm workers should be protected by law in such matters as wages, hours and tenure, under decent working and living conditions. The efforts of the National Farm Labor Union to organize should win aid and encouragement on all sides.

Guilt

"LESS than 1% of humanity have caused most of the world's major troubles." This consoling little dictum has been widely publicized by Father Keller's Christopher movement. It is usually found, in italic type, as a kind of preamble to the statement which defines the "Purpose of the Christophers." It is, one gathers, a key Christopher idea, basic to the rest of the program, like "We hold these truths to be self-evident. . . ." It is a kind of starting point for Christopher thinking and, in some cases at least, also for sympathetic criticism of the movement itself.

Life would be comparatively simple if Father Keller's optimistic figure were true. But it isn't. Reason, personal experience, history and, above all, theology argue to the contrary. This is not to deny Father Keller's finding that the ordinary Joe is a pretty decent sort after all. But it is to affirm such realities as human cussedness, human ignorance and, again above all, human sin. It is to reject an oversimplification of evil in the world, which cannot be blamed on a mere one percent, or ten percent or even ninety-five percent. It is to recall that every man coming into the world is marked with the sign of Adam and that few if any leave it without having added their bit to the world's misery.

Life, unfortunately, is not a show-boat melodrama, with virtue and villainy clearly marked off from each other in the cast. There may be religions which wrapped themselves in a cloak of righteousness and put most of the blame for the world's evil on those beyond the fold, but this has never been a Christian—or a realistic—view. The saints, who understood evil better than others because they knew more of good, were wise in their knowledge. They said over and over that each man bears his own guilt for the world's misery; and every saint was quick to say that no man was guiltier than himself.

Probably because the misery in the modern world is so monstrous, found on such a vast, almost inconceivable scale, there is a general tendency to adopt the one-percent explanation. What man, for instance, feels a personal guilt for the bony wretches found at Auschwitz or Buchenwald? Who is haunted by memories of

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the 42,000 dead of Nagasaki? Who still hears the cries of the 6,000,000 dead Jews? Who worries about the million European DP's lost during the forced migrations? A few saints perhaps, acutely aware of their own guilt and their own shame. Most of us see only the obvious and take comfort in the comparatively small numbers enrolled in the S.S., in the Communist Party or in the Spanish Falange. When we walk through the Negro slums, we can find another group: maybe the politicians, or the Negro leaders or the Southern senators. Before a crucifix, we may think of ourselves before we turn on the Jewish high priests or the Roman soldiery, but we forget that evil is of a piece.

When the atom bomb was dropped on Japan, most of us were as surprised as the Japanese. Less, far less than one percent knew the awful secret. Of the mass slaughter at Hiroshima, we could say we didn't know, we had had nothing to say about it.

Now it is a question of a hydrogen bomb. One thousand times as deadly, capable of destroying human life within an area of 100 square miles, perhaps killing 250,000 people rather than a mere 42,000. This time we know in advance; there is no secret. It has even been announced on the front pages that President Truman, who made the other fateful decision, will decide for us again within the next few weeks: to manufacture the bomb or to withdraw from the awful prospect. There is nothing subversive about it, no secret group meeting in hidden council. The decision is being made by a natty little man we all know, a member of the American Legion, a man who likes to call his wife The Real Boss, a man as wholesome and thoroughly American as an ordinary Kansas City haberdashery. He is a man who acts in our name and is not deaf to our will.

It is not really a new decision. It is only a matter of degree: a bomb one thousand times as deadly as the first and an undertaking probably cheaper than the Manhattan project (cost: estimated from 200 million to 2 billion dollars). Once we have accepted Hiroshima, this is a step forward.

And so, it seems, will we move ahead, one step at a time, like a mathematician approaching infinity. In time no one, not even the conscientious President, will bother much about decisions. But that time has not yet come. It is still possible to remind ourselves that when the hydrogen bomb is dropped on some city, it will not be because one percent of the population conspired but because most of us gave silent consent or held our tongues. When the bomb is dropped, it will be dropped in our name.

The "Christopher Reminder" for this month reads: "A country usually gets the kind of government it deserves."

Censorship

THE Associated Press has published a survey of those places in the world where information is censored. In the last year no major barriers have come down, and new ones have been erected. So now, says the AP, one fourth of the world's populated area is subject to some degree of censorship.

Regular censorship exists in Burma, Egypt, Greece, Indo-China, Israel, Iran, Poland, and the Soviet Union. Irregular, informal or indirect censorship is imposed in Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, the Dominican Republic, British-occupied Eritrea and Cyprus, Japan, Portugal, Rumania, Spain, Venezuela, Yugoslavia, and some ten other countries.

Included are instances where, although no formal censorship exists, correspondents from abroad are not admitted, or are 'held accountable' for what they say. In South Africa the Minister of Posts and Telegraph has said "Those people who send reports to newspapers overseas slandering South Africa . . . must not expect of me that all their reports will reach their destination." In Argentina the domestic independent press has, in part, had its newsprint cut off by congressional committees, or has been forced to close for alleged violations of health regulations, and is subject to a "law of disrespect."

Public decision and civic action depends upon adequate public information. Censorship (with its complement: propaganda) is the most subtle method of aborting the action of a community.

But isn't it necessary to protect people from their enemies, from errors, from lies? Democracy, and the Christian definition of a human person, are alike in depending upon freedom. The person, we say, is one who is able to make decisions; who possesses the ability to do wrong. A democracy is founded upon the decisions of its citizens, and is subject to their perversity.

When an authority undertakes to protect the immature from political falsehood, as in the recent bannings from high schools of the Soviet Information Bulletin, it involves itself in protecting them from mistake. Should not the Chicago *Tribune* be barred from those same high schools?

Protecting people from themselves is a dangerous business. At one level, that of protecting a society's common morality, distinctions are more easily drawn: pornography is not hard to recognize. On a political level, the one who undertakes to make the decisions—the Information Bulletin goes, the *Tribune* stays—undertakes a terrible responsibility.

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The alternative to banning ideas, opinions and falsehood is what Robert Hutchins says is a "long difficult road of education. . . . It requires patience and tolerance even in the face of intense provocation." It is a question of freedom, for if people are to make mature decisions, they must have the freedom to be fools.

The Fall of China

WHEN the Chinese Nationalists took flight from the mainland to the island of Formosa, China, the world's most populous country, left the company of the democracies and joined the expanding Russian empire. So did Soviet Communism continue to fill out its design for the future and to give shape and meaning to the term "world revolution."

To meet this challenge, Secretary Acheson has announced an Asia policy based on "the single most important fact" of the eventual Chinese "hatred" of the Russians, when the Chinese realize that Russia has annexed their four northern provinces. Less delicately put, Mr. Acheson is saying that Russia has just kicked China in the teeth and, if we will all just wait awhile, China is going to be very, very angry when she regains consciousness. He believes, further, that nationalism is no longer to be denied anywhere in Asia and our job now is to encourage these nationalist movements, going gently, putting forward always the purest of motives and all the time showing up Russia as a devouring Bear. Gradually the Asiatics will come around to our way of seeing things.

Certainly these proposals have a high-minded tone and there is a great deal of wisdom in them. They require of us a minimum of exertion, so little, in fact, that Mr. Acheson, dedicated to the soft touch, appears unwilling at this point even to organize a very coherent program of aid to the various nationalist movements, lest we be accused of sinister intentions.

One would like very much to believe in such a policy, to watch the nonchalant mind triumph so casually over the cynic. Unfortunately, the facts of recent history leave us without real faith in this policy, because we have learned that a police-state, once established, cannot be blown down casually. Nor does it come into being casually. We know of only one way to prevent the spread of the police-state: by a show of moral and physical resistance and by a lot of hard work organizing a vigorous program of reconstruction. We are without real faith in this policy as it stands, because it is virtually without dynamic and psychological initiative. In Asia, the West has taken not only a physical beating, but it is psychologically on the run and the whole world knows it.

To restore that initiative, that will to resist, in our minds and in the minds of the Asiatics, we asked that the United States refuse to recognize Communist China and that it send military assistance to the Nationalists on Formosa, on the condition that the Nationalists put their program of social reform in order. We were well aware of the diplomatic and political risks involved in this policy; our overriding motive was to fix in all minds a common front, a common program of social democracy, a determination to free the oppressed everywhere from Soviet aggression.

The course of action we recommended is now practically lost to us. In its place is, so far, Secretary Acheson's largely negative approach. Because of his delayed-reaction policy and because of politics, some Republicans would like now to see Mr. Acheson's head roll for our China disaster. At a time when this nation is surely faced with one of the most serious and difficult problems in its history, we would expect and welcome more of wisdom than of anger from his critics.

Perhaps it is only by getting up and leaving this national argument that one can understand what has happened in China. Then it begins to take on a larger proportion. We remember, when France fell to the Nazis, seeing pictures of French men and women weeping in the streets, as they watched the Germans strut toward the Arc de Triomphe. It was, we felt, a sorrow so close, so complete, that one could not think of it merely as a French sorrow. Rather, in the person of France, the human family, in its heart a hunger for freedom, took that sorrow all together, watching and wondering, How did this happen? What sequence of failures brought us to this? And because there were not words enough to answer that, men wept over their broken resistance.

If we are to ask ourselves the same questions in regard to China, there are some answers to account for our failures, American and Chinese. But it seems to us that this is not merely a sorrow to be borne by those patient and suffering Chinese who know what has happened to their country, who know that China has lost her fight. Rather the time approaches when inevitably all of us together must stand, as this darkness closes in, to answer for what has happened in China, for what has happened in the human family. The answers we give cannot be glib and easy ones, because the questions themselves touch on the meaning and the mystery of human existence, of suffering, of moral resistance to evil. It seems now that one can sense that the time draws nearer when man may once again go out into the heights beyond his city on earth, and looking down on his Jerusalem, he, too, would weep bitterly, because there are not words enough for what he would see there.

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The Battle of the Hiring Halls

Along the waterfront, a fight ensues to replace the shapeup and the kickback with democratic hiring.

Daniel Seligman

HARRY BRIDGES and Joe Curran don't agree on a great many issues these days, but there is one on which they are firmly united. During 1949, Bridges' International Longshoremen's & Warehousemen's Union tied up shipping on the West Coast, and virtually wrecked the Hawaiian economy, in a battle over this issue. In 1950, Curran's National Maritime Union may hit the bricks in Eastern and Gulf ports fighting for the same cause. Curran has already warned a Congressional committee that there will be "chaos and disturbance" on the waterfront in 1950 if he is crossed on this issue. "I don't care what the Government says or does about this," he told one reporter, "we're not going to back down. Our policy is 'no compromise.' We're going to stick to it."

This tough talk refers to the union hiring hall, and to the waterfront unions' determination to hang on to it. The hiring hall has been the chief agency for recruiting labor in the ports for more than ten years. The halls, which are owned and operated by the unions, send out seamen and longshoremen to the companies on a rotary basis; that is, the men who have been out of work the longest get the first cracks at any new jobs for which they are qualified. By and large, the halls have been models of democratic unionism. They have introduced a measure of stability into waterfront employment, insured the seamen against discrimination by the companies, and ended the days of the crimps and shanghai-artists.

It is instructive to note that the only important waterfront union today which does *not* use the hiring hall is Joe Ryan's slugger-dominated International Longshoremen's Association. Ryan's men get their jobs through the shapeup, an institution in which a group of longshoremen assemble for the purpose of having some of their number picked for jobs by company agents. Since the shapeup is usually synonymous with the kickback, it is not, to put it mildly, very popular on the waterfront, and can be enforced only when there are plenty of hoods and goons around to enforce it. It is not a partisan statement or an exaggeration to say that the system of graft on the waterfront is based entirely on the shapeup. This, to be blunt, is why the ILA petitioned Congress last fall to defend the institution. And it is also why Bridges, Curran, and the AFL's Harry Lundeberg—who runs both the Seafarers' International Union and the Sailors' Union of the Pacific—have been battling to preserve the hiring hall.

The trouble is that the hiring hall seems to be illegal. The Taft-Hartley Act outlaws the closed shop, and the hiring hall would appear, on any reasonable construction of the term, to be a form of the closed shop. An NLRB trial examiner ruled that it was illegal in the NMU, and his decision was sustained by the Board itself and by the U. S. Circuit Court of Appeals. Judge Jerome Frank, who wrote this decision for the court, acknowledged that he was doing so reluctantly, and "without regard to our own beliefs, no matter how strong they may happen to be, as to the social undesirability of the resultant return to the so-called shapeup in the employment of seamen." There was nothing the union could do, he said, outside of "persuading the present Congress or electing new senators and congressmen who agree with them." The NLRB has got around to Bridges' ILWU only recently, but here again there is very little doubt as to the final outcome in the courts. The U. S. Supreme Court is expected to review the legality of the hiring halls some time this spring; when it makes its probable decision against them, all hell can be expected to break loose.

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UNTIL the Supreme Court rules, however, the halls are being permitted to exist. Despite the Taft-Hartley Act, Curran refused to sign any new contracts last year that did not provide for them. The steamship companies fought him all the way, but in the end his intransigence paid off; it was agreed that the halls would stay in operation at least until the high court gave its verdict. Bridges reached a similar compromise with the Pacific Waterfront Employers' Association at the end of his 97-day strike. Lundeberg is also keeping his hiring halls open tentatively.

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All three men, meanwhile, are looking frantically to Washington for help. They would prefer, of course, to see the Taft-Hartley Act repealed, but the Administration's dismal showing so far in this great crusade has disabused them of any optimism in the matter. Right now, their chief interest is in the Lesinski-Magnuson Bill, which would simply exempt waterfront unions from the closed-shop provision of the Taft-Hartley Act. Curran expressed the hope recently that Senator Taft himself might support this bill. In any case, Curran hopes fervently that some kind of ameliorative legislation can be rushed through before the Supreme Court comes to grips with the problem. The Court, which has been procrastinating on the issue for months, apparently hopes so too.

The fact is that the maritime unions have special problems which were not considered by the authors of the Taft-Hartley Act. Under the Act, a shore-side union can have the protection of a union shop; that is, non-union members can go to work in a plant provided they join the union within 30 days. But in the maritime industry, as Curran told the House Labor Committee, "a seaman, willing to accept the benefits of union representation and of a union contract without the corresponding obligation of paying for any part of its costs, could pursue his calling until 'kingdom come' without ever being required to join a union. . . . In no time, non-union elements could make such effective inroads as to render impotent any effective union organization." The trouble is that seamen, unlike auto workers or barbers, do not work regularly. They sign up for hauls of varying lengths, and ordinarily figure on short periods of unemployment between hauls. So that a seaman who wanted to could spend his whole life shipping out on freighters covered by NMU contracts without ever joining the union; he would only have to avoid taking on any hauls that were scheduled to last longer than 30 days. Or even if he signed up for occasional longer hauls, it is questionable whether he could be forced to join the union on the thirtieth day; you can't get rid of a man when you're on the high seas, and even if you could there would be no one available to replace him. The point that the Taft-Hartley Act overlooked is that wherever work is irregular, the union shop is not likely to fit easily into the picture. This situation is further complicated by the fact that irregular work tends to attract a higher percentage of anti-social elements—the types that are the last to join a union and the first to scab. The building-trades unions, which have roughly similar problems, are also pressing for exemption from the closed-shop laws.

In other words, there is no real middle ground on the waterfront between the hiring hall and the open shop. The companies were quick to grasp the fact that the Taft-Hartley Act opened up the prospect of a return to the latter. They have been cautious in their public statements, however. One spokesman for the American Merchant Marine Institute avowed that, even if the companies had the right to pick their men where they chose, "the great majority of men would continue to be obtained from the union halls." In theory, all they want is "the right to select the best men;" under the rotary hiring system, they have argued, "the steamship companies are forced to take less efficient men than are obtainable." These agreeable-sounding words were laid into with great fury by Curran in his appearance before the House Labor Committee. "They had a right to select ever since 1845," he said, "and they did a pretty good job of knocking them over the head to select them and taking their families and everything else. On this question of efficiency, the United States government is the one that declares whether a man is efficient or not. They issue certificates. And if there is a difference on efficiency, the United States government is the one for [the companies] to quarrel with, not . . . the union."

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THE steamship lines are seriously handicapped in their fight against the hiring hall by their own record in pre-union days. There has never been a time in American maritime history when the companies actually did what they now insist they would like to do. Seamen were never, in fact, hired for their ability in the days when the companies did the hiring. As recently as 1934, conditions on board were usually so bad that much of the hiring had to be done by crimps and boarding-house kidnapers. Where seamen walked across the gangplank voluntarily, it was ordinarily only because they were driven to it by economic necessity; and even to get the miserable jobs that were available most of the men had to pay off company agents. Harry Lundeberg has described these conditions with immense bitterness. "The type of people the shipowners relied upon to man their vessels were the cheapest kind of hoodlums they could pick up. If you went into one of the shipowners' hiring halls to look for a job, you found yourself in company with characters from all over the country—hopheads, lead hounds, gas hounds—and a very few *bona fide* seamen, because the *bona fide* seamen could not get a job. And they had a system that if you wanted a job bad enough and if you had a five-dollar bill, you stuck the bill into the discharge book which you had to have in order to get a job. . . . They never asked you what you could do, how much you knew about the business." This was at

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a time when the steamship companies were paying between $25 and $50 a month for a twelve-hour day.

There is very little doubt that the hiring halls have substantially raised the calibre of the men sailing under the American flag. The hoodlums and dockwallopers have been kept off the ships in recent years; no one without a certificate of aptitude from the U. S. Coast Guard can join the seamen's unions. Curran, who is apt to get belligerent on this issue, once went so far as to say that the hiring halls have provided the companies with a million dollars' worth of service every year. And his own personal history provides testimony hard to refute: he was one of the seamen turned down for a berth on the *Morro Castle* just before her last run. His employment book showed too much experience, it seems, and the hiring agents did not want men around who knew too much. They got what they wanted; when the ship began to burn, the port loafers who were manning her were the first to get into the lifeboats.

There is, however, the problem of the occasional incompetents who are sent to the companies through the hiring halls. No Coast Guard inspection can determine whether a man will turn into a drunkard, loafer, or trouble-maker. The companies claim that their ships are often held up in disputes over the fitness of seamen who come to them through the halls. Here, to be fair, the facts are hard to come by. NMU contracts give the employers the right to turn down an applicant for legitimate cause—drunkenness, lateness, bad health, etc. The latest contract between the union and the East Coast Operators provides that "whenever an employee furnished by the union is deemed unsatisfactory to the company, the company shall promptly notify the union of its decision not to accept, and the union agrees promptly to furnish a replacement." There has always been a fairly continuous squabbling over this clause, and there probably always will be. The companies complain that the unions are not as prompt about sending replacements as they might be. The union insists that replacements go out as quickly as possible, and it belabors the companies for rejecting on trivial and capricious grounds, *e.g.*, for high blood-pressure. However, since most of the rejectees are able to find work elsewhere, the disputes usually end quickly, and comparatively few prosecutions for unfair labor practices are brought by either side.

*

THE whole issue of the hiring halls would never have come to a head, despite the Taft-Hartley Act, if it had not been for a steady growth in waterfront unemployment over the past two years. During the war, when there were shortages of seamen and longshoremen, it did not matter much who employed the men; all of them were going to work with some degree of regularity anyway. Now the situation is drastically different. About 500,000 seamen's certificates are held in the country today; about 100,000 seamen are employable. Among longshoremen, the disparity is not quite so great, but here too it is growing. As far as the seamen are concerned, this situation could be partially remedied by raising the Coast Guard standards. "In some ports," Curran complains, "they issue certificates just like they come out of a hamburger machine." He admits, however, that no matter what the Coast Guard does, the union will have an employment crisis on its hands for quite a while. The long-term solution is to end the division of the world; right now, there are too many places where American ships cannot sail.

The unemployment crisis, and the prospect that it will continue indefinitely, is what has made the battle over hiring halls so intense. In the back of all the participants' minds is the realization that the waterfront unions might be broken. If seamen become desperate for work, and if the union loses control of their employment, then the way will have been cleared for a union-busting campaign. Curran acknowledged recently that if the hiring halls were ended, the NMU would be in serious danger.

In recent months, a new dimension has been added to the picture. This is the frightening issue of discrimination within the union. When jobs are scarce, it becomes especially important that the halls distribute them fairly. But in divided unions, the pressure to discriminate can become great. Curran insists that NMU hiring halls have never discriminated against anyone, even the hated "hacks" (Stalinists). But his opponents in the union have charged that it is difficult for them even to get into the halls nowadays. Whether or not the charge is valid, there is no doubt that a *fear* of discrimination has existed among some elements in the NMU during recent months, and that this fear was one of the things which prompted some of Curran's opponents to begin a civil war within the union.

The prudent reporter, caught in a barrage of accusations and counter-accusations, cannot do much but suspend judgment. But it would be a tragedy for the American labor movement if the waterfront hiring halls were not retained on a completely democratic basis. If they are not, one more argument will have been provided for the open shop in the ports—and the seamen and longshoremen will be one step closer to the shapeup, the crimp, and the kickback.

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Italy's Civic Committees

These unique groups, led by the vice-president of Italian Catholic Action, face grave political temptations.

Leo J. Wollemborg

WITHIN the framework of the worldwide counter-offensive launched by the Catholic Church against Communism and highlighted by the excommunication of all followers of the Marxist doctrine, five million Italians are now being mobilized for the greatest anti-Communist drive that country has ever seen. Leading and sparking this drive are the man and the organization that already played such an outstanding, perhaps decisive, role in turning back the Communist tide in the general election of April 18, 1948: Professor Luigi Gedda and his Civic Committees.

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THE Committees were conceived and organized to give the people something that the organized parties could not give: a rallying center for all those who, irrespective of political or religious affiliation, wanted to contribute to the anti-Communist struggle.

The two main slogans of the Committees' campaign were: "Do your duty and vote!" and: "Don't disperse your votes: make them count!" A record turnout of some 95% of the registered voters cast their ballot; the Christian-Democrats secured 48% of the popular vote. It was a defeat for the Communists, who, despite more votes than in 1946, were snowed under by the two or three million additional voters the Committees succeeded in getting out.

After the victory, many people thought the Committees' work was done. Even among the Christian-Democrats, quite a few expected, and some may have wished, that the organization would disband. But the intentions of Signor Gedda and of his closest collaborators were quite different.

"We felt," he told me in one of several long conversations, "that our task was by no means completed. We had conceived our job as a 'public health' job, a job of surveillance and propaganda, aimed at keeping public opinion in a state of pre-alarm, of alert, if you like. We had succeeded, in the nick of time, in arousing the people to the Communist danger; we didn't want them to go to sleep once more."

"An organization like ours is especially needed in a country like Italy, where under normal circumstances only a small percentage of the population can be considered politically-minded and politically active. Just think that only 4.5 million Italians are registered members of a political party—about two millions belonging to the Communist Party, a little over a million to the Christian-Democratic party, a few hundred thousands to each of the minor parties—left-wing socialists, moderate socialists, republicans, liberals, monarchists and neo-fascists. Altogether they amount to a bare 10% of the population, or 16% of the registered voters."

The same principles and methods continued to mark the work of the Committees, while their network was further spreading all over the country to reach their present strength of some 20,000 local branches. Likewise, their leadership has continued to exhibit a practical grasp of political issues, a technical skill in facing them and a talent for organization which can only arouse the admiration of the observer, whatever opinion he may hold about the guiding spirit and the aims of the movement. The Civic Committees still ignore party labels and affiliations. They still reject all the methods and trappings of a traditional political party. They still rely mostly on voluntary work and contributions—although they now derive part of their income from participation in profitable commercial enterprises. They still refuse to present their own lists of candidates for local or national office.

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GENERALLY speaking, of course, their action closely parallels the policies of the Christian-Democratic Party; but theirs is more like a relationship between two friendly but independent Powers. And Signor Gedda's repeated assertions that he doesn't intend to turn the Committees into a political rival of Signor De Gasperi's party have not completely allayed the anxieties of some Christian-Democrats. There was an election held a few months ago in the Aosta Valley, in the northwestern corner of Italy. The

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leaders of the Christian-Democratic Party had decided to form an electoral alliance with the Union Valdotaine—a pro-French, strongly autonomist outfit. Gedda and his Committees are vigorously anti-regionalist. When they failed to break up this alliance, they adopted a typical maneuver. Without endorsing any party list, they advised the electorate to vote "according to their conscience," that is to pick their candidates from various lists, as allowed by the local electoral law. "Of course," Gedda told me "we fully realized the drawbacks of such a complicated procedure; but we felt the issue at stake was important enough to justify the risk. Well, the results were most gratifying, I think, and they may have given to both our enemies and our friends," he added with a barely suppressed note of pride in his voice, "a fair yardstick of the power of the Civic Committees. In the 1948 elections, the Christian-Democrats had polled 29,000 votes. This time, the straight ticket of the coalition between Christian-Democrats and Union Valdotaine received but 12,000 votes. The candidates supported by us got over 8,000, while the Communists maintained their positions with about 14,000 votes".

On the other hand, elections held last June in the Free Territory of Trieste provide, according to Signor Gedda, a striking confirmation of the results that can be achieved through a close collaboration between the Christian-Democratic Party and the Civic Committees—along the lines acceptable to the latter.

Several weeks prior to the elections, some of Gedda's closest collaborators went to Trieste for an "on the spot" survey. On the basis of their report, the Professor advised the Christian-Democrats to give up their original idea of building up an "Italian bloc"—which would have automatically led to the formation of a Slav counterbloc. Instead, he suggested that the election campaign should be fought on religious rather than on purely nationalistic lines. The suggestion was accepted. As a result—Signor Gedda concluded—the Christian-Democratic list received about 65,000 votes (almost 40% of the total), among them perhaps 15,000 Slav Catholic votes which otherwise would have gone to Tito or even to the Communists.

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THERE is another aspect of the Committees' activity that Signor Gedda considers more typical and even more important than the role they have played in those electoral battles.

There is, for instance, the intensive six-month drive launched in November, 1948, to break the Communist hold on organized labor. It will be remembered that during the summer of that year, the long-simmering crisis within the six-million-strong Italian General Confederation of Labor (CGIL) came finally to a head. The Christian-Democratic representatives refused to follow the leadership of the Communist-dominated majority any longer and walked out, setting up their own labor organization, the "Free Confederation of Workers" (LCGIL). At first, the move, or at least its timing, appeared to have been a mistake. The strength of the CGIL was barely dented, and its prestige scarcely impaired, especially since the representatives of the other democratic parties (Republicans and moderate Socialists) still remained in the old organization.

Then the Civic Committees swung into action. More and more space was devoted to labor problems in their official publication *Collegamento* ("Liaison") which is intended to keep the 20,000 branches throughout Italy in touch with the central organization in Rome. A further step was taken with the publication of a new periodical *L'Interesse del Lavoratore* ("The Worker's Interests") which has reached a circulation of a million copies.

The approach was the one used during the electoral campaign of 1948. In fact, the "labor drive" was presented as the logical continuation of that original campaign: "First we blocked the political invasion of Communism; now, we are fighting the Communist monopoly of the forces of labor," Gedda wrote in one of his editorials in *Collegamento*. Special care was taken to counteract the charges leveled at the "Free Confederation," currently accused by the Communists of being a tool of the Christian-Democratic party or a stooge of the capitalists, or both. Once more, the Committees carefully refrained from propaganda conducted along purely party lines. At the same time, they branded both "profiteer capitalism" and "Communism, ready to sacrifice man to a monstrous State capitalism" as equally dangerous enemies of the worker.

By early Summer 1949—Gedda claims—this all-out drive had brought some two million workers into the ranks of the "Free Unions," while the strength of the Communist-led CGIL had been cut in half. Some observers may be inclined to discount those claims. Still, a few days after Signor Gedda gave me those figures, the reports of heavy losses for the Communist-dominated labor organization were confirmed by its Secretary-General, Signor Di Vittorio, who admitted that the membership of the Milan Chamber of Labor, the largest and strongest in Italy, had dropped by about 200,000 (almost 40%). He hastened to add that the Milan situation was by no means representative.

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SO MUCH for the past activities and achievements of the Civic Committees. What about their plans and programs for the future?

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Two main drives have been under preparation for several months and are scheduled to reach their peak in early 1950.

The first is the so-called "Aiutiamoci" ("Let's help ourselves") campaign, designed to check the seasonal rise in unemployment during the winter months, which in turn might well lead to an upturn in the Communist following in the country.

The Committees' policy in this campaign will develop along two parallel lines. They will continue to urge the Government to meet the unemployment issue by enacting a concrete program of public works and industrial reorganization. They are also preparing to tackle directly the problem on a local, almost personal basis. Specific agreements, intended to provide "job reservoirs" to be tapped at the right moment and in the most critical areas, have already been entered into, or are in progress of negotiation with the *Confindustria* (the Italian NAM) and with individual industrialists.

"As usual," Signor Gedda said, "we are going to work along non-partisan lines, making sure only that the jobs will go to those who really need them, and not to those phony unemployed who are registered as such and have some 'unofficial' job somewhere. We naturally expect to be accused of taking care only of those who are politically 'right' — practicing Catholics, Christian-Democratic sympathizers, etc. Well, we don't care: what matters is to show that the Committees are able to help and get things done. When people see that, they'll come to us all right, whatever they may have been thinking or saying about us before".

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THE second campaign, which in fact ranks first on the Civic Committees' agenda, is a direct outgrowth of the Vatican decree officially outlawing Communism.

Signor Gedda confirmed that the immediate impulse for the excommunication came from the increasingly bitter persecution of Catholicism beyond the Iron Curtain rather than from the situation in Italy itself or in other Western countries. Still, he was clearly happy that the Church's decision should have ended, in Italy too, a condition of suspense, incertitude and ambiguity which could benefit only the Communists.

"The best proof that such a situation worked to the exclusive advantage of the Reds," Gedda told me, "is given by their efforts to maintain this most absurd of all fictions: that it is possible to reconcile Christianity with Marxism. Our Communists have gone to ridiculous lengths indeed to deceive people into believing that you can be at the same time a Catholic and a Communist. Why, only the other day, I was told that at Primavalle (one of the poorest suburbs of Rome) the local Communist headquarters was all lighted up for the procession of the Holy Virgin!

"But now the time for hedging and fence-straddling is over. The decree of the Holy Office has made the issue crystal-clear: either you are with us and against them, or you are with them and against us. Of course, we risk losing a few timid souls and a few professional trimmers; but they are not the kind we care to have with us anyway. On the other hand, we are ready to show the utmost consideration toward all those who have been pushed towards Communism through ignorance or need: they have the highest priority on our list of 'recuperables.' And there are hundreds of thousands of them in Italy alone, you know."

After months of careful preparation, the great drive is about to get into high gear. Beginning this month, Italian Communists are supposed to start taking out their new party cards for 1950. At this psychologically critical moment, each basis, by the propagandists whom the Civic Committees specially trained for the job during the Communist is to be approached, on an individual summer and who are commonly referred to as *animatori*.

"This time," Professor Gedda explained to me, "our approach won't be through visual propaganda. It won't be through mass meetings or group action, which may place our prospective 'converts' in a psychologically difficult position towards their fellow-Communists. It will be through individual action, on a man-to-man, I would almost say on a soul-to-soul, basis. And I'm confident that the results will be a gratifying surprise to our friends and a nasty shock to our adversaries."

On the basis of the record of last year's "labor drive," we can guess that the first goal set by the Civic Committees is to cut in half the present membership of the Italian Communist Party, still around the two million mark. If this goal should be met, say, by next summer, Signor Gedda and his collaborators would be in a fair way to turn the Italian Communist Party from the second strongest political force in the land into a mere nuisance.

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"HOW many members of the Italian Parliament do you 'control'?" Such was the very indiscreet and deliberately clumsy question I fired at Signor Gedda towards the end of one of our conversations.

"Eventually, we aim at 'controlling' all of them, except, of course, the Communists."

The reply, diplomatic and revealing at the same time, underlines, and doesn't answer, what I believe to be the main question mark about the future course of the Civic Committees and their ultimate role in Italian politics.

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Is it possible for such a movement—which already claims a "zone of influence" of five million people and admittedly sets its sights much higher—to remain on this politically unorthodox basis? Or isn't it bound to come, sooner or later, into direct competition with the "regular" parties, perhaps first of all, the Christian-Democratic party? Last but not least, won't it eventually develop from a mass movement, intended to arouse, inform and educate the people according to certain ideals, into a totalitarian or quasi-totalitarian party bent on taking over, in the name of those same ideals, the government of the country?

In Italy today, there is, on one hand, a massive but only too often passive majority, namely the Christian-Democrats; on the other hand, there is a purely negative, nay subversive minority—the Communists. In between the two, there is no constructive, "loyal" opposition: moderate Socialists, Republicans and Liberals are obviously too weak to fill the role, whether they remain in the Government or decide to get out of it.

Under the circumstances—which painfully spotlight the political immaturity and the renewed apathy of large sections of Italian public opinion—it was natural and probably beneficial that the vacuum should have been filled by some organization like the Civic Committees. But once more can this be a permanent or even a relatively lasting solution? The answer, as I'm sure Professor Gedda himself would agree, can only be in the negative.

The decisive action at the time of the 1948 elections; the "labor drive," the "help ourselves" campaign and the drive to cut down to size the Italian Communist Party, scheduled for this winter: all those are concrete contributions by the Civic Committees to the cause of Italian democracy. And no doubt there will be yet other tasks that the organization will have the opportunity to tackle and usefully fulfil in the future. But won't the day come when no ready-made "mission" will be immediately available, and won't the temptation be strong to "invent" such a mission, lest the accumulated dynamism of the organization waste away?

On the other hand, Professor Gedda may succeed in steering his Civic Committees clear of the entanglements and pitfalls of professional politics. He may resist the twin temptation of trying to take over the government of the country directly or of establishing over it an indirect but equally all-pervasive control. He is a man of uncommon abilities and of uncommonly high ambition. This ambition may be so high as to enable him to continue to stay out of the limelight and even to accept that his organization, after fulfilling its most essential tasks, dissolve itself into the enriched bloodstream of a truly democratic Italy.

The Stage

The Member of the Wedding

IT IS NOT necessary to be long-winded about Carson McCullers' irresistible play. In one sentence, it is a complete delight.

Readers of Mrs. McCullers' short novel will remember it as a saga of innocence. As it is played out on the stage, we find a small girl of twelve years, Frankie Addams, enduring the loneliest, the hottest, the strangest summer of her life. Frankie is not a member of anything. She hasn't got a mother, she hasn't got a club, she's lost her only friend, her father is a busy man. All she has got is a kitchen to come back to—where Berenice Sadie Brown, the colored cook, presides. And she also has the ambivalent devotion of her cousin, John Henry West, who is five years old and a very curious little boy.

Into this small-town Georgia scene, in the August of 1945, suddenly appears her grown-up brother and his fiancée. There is to be a wedding and Frankie is to take part. Slowly, it occurs to this adorable waif that she is to be included for the first time. There is to be a wedding and she is to be a member. It follows that she will also, naturally, be a member of the marriage afterwards: she will leave this place, travel the world, be on the radio, go to Hollywood, win everything. Most of all, from now on, she will be able to say "we" instead of merely "I."

I don't think any résumé ought—in fairness to everyone—to tell the whole story. It will be as well to leave this American kid's solution of her identity to her spectators, with the earnest hope that any reader of this column will want to shoot for tickets to the play. In the meantime, there are critical facets to the production which are inevitable, and which I want to define.

It is important, first of all, to note that Mrs. McCullers' script can be nothing much in hand. If, in line with its present grand impact, it should be published tomorrow, I don't think distant people would be in any way capable of grasping its appeal. It is true that the author has proved herself to be psychologically apt (accurate is perhaps the better word), in the depiction of children and adolescents. She is perhaps even more apt in her handling of the phraseology and vocabulary of Southern talk. And in this tale at least, she is overall creative in rejecting all the tedious furniture of the Mason-Dixon grotesque—I mean the embellishments which have so temporarily established the Capotes of our editorial regime: the baby Faulkners, all of whom would seem to be forever armed with contracts, plus a fearsome aunt, and rainbow memories of falling moss and crawling sex. To repeat, in this tale at least, Mrs. McCullers has created simply (I think marvelously), children and people. And she has dealt them dialogue which is not only inherent but irrevocable.

But this is no reason to infer that she must have, in

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addition, the dramatic imagination. It will be far more precise to remark, in the present instance, that she has had uncanny theatrical luck. Of the four principals at stake in the piece (I am naming Harold Clurman, the director, as one of these), it seems to me that not one has wasted any skill, understanding, high talents, and (yes) love, in forwarding its theme. There is nothing too good to say of Julie Harris in the adolescent lead. It is true Miss Harris seems shaped to the rôle: she is short enough, square enough, flat enough, to look like a twelve-year-old, but this is only a small part of her appeal. She must also progress from large violence to small tears; she must speak in an honest and planned rhetoric and with a native accent; she must soliloquize and she must dream; she must jump, bang, scream, whisper, visibly fade away, and reappear. All this she does.

Ethel Waters playing the Negro cook is no less astonishing. The eight-year-old Brandon De Wilde as the "Candy Lamb" is as wonderful when he is merely using the stage silently, according to Mr. Clurman's scheme, as he is when articulating some of Mrs. McCullers' most poignant lines. It is impossible to know whether to call this thing a director's triumph or an actors' one. Every lapse in the script is made a theatrical point. There are no smartly written intervals, for instance. Miss Waters brings two of the curtains down sheerly by art, and Miss Harris does another. They both do all they can—and succeed—with an abysmal final scene where we get mouthfuls of last-minute exposition plus no drama at all. And what it all adds up to is a theatre evening of elegant size. Out of a framework provided by a sensitive and highly gifted writer, it appears that a director can build a fine play; and that actors can play it to the hilt. It is interesting to learn that, one time at least, the system can work—and work well. (*at the Empire*)

KAPPO PHELAN.

The Screen

Travel Broadens

IT'S WONDERFUL how a man can see the world without leaving his own city—indeed, without even leaving his local movie theater. Of course the fare dished up to him may not stimulate his mental processes very much; but the places and settings of some of the films on our screens now will certainly interest globe trotters.

Actually the plot of *The Rugged O'Riordans* doesn't differ greatly from our own settling-the-west movies, but this Australian film does have a new set of faces and some magnificent down-under scenery. Along with other Irish immigrants the O'Riordans settled in Australia and built their farm in the 1890s, but when their sons grew up this farm wasn't big enough to take care of them all. So their five lusty young men moved on to conquer new wildernesses. And this is the story of the tough time these five men, with a widower neighbor and his daughter, had in homesteading new territory offered by the government. This is pretty rugged country and after watching these settlers climb, chop, haul and struggle with the weather you begin to feel that you've lived through some of these experiences yourself. Along with this portrait of hard labor is a triangular love story involving two of the brothers and the widower's daughter. Producer-director Charles Chauvel has given his film a hearty primitive quality. Although the acting is not particularly outstanding, the cast does succeed in conveying a warm feeling of togetherness and family which, with the good scenery, will win you to Australia.

Going several islands and miles to the north, we arrive at the locale of *"South Sea Sinner,"* a Hollywood concoction about several men of dubious reputation and one woman of very definite ill-repute. Shelley Winters plays this dame with gusto, and as she entertains the flotsam and jetsam that wander in and out of the low dive run by Luther Adler, men find that they just can't keep their eyes off her voice. The story in this movie gets rather involved, but the plot is only a peg on which to hang brawls and amatory episodes. Macdonald Carey, Frank Lovejoy, Art Smith and several other men surround Shelley. I don't think you'll really learn a lot about the South Seas from this movie.

"Sands of Iwo Jima" gives a much more realistic picture of this part of the world—and a much grimmer picture too, as its locale moves from a training camp in New Zealand during the last war, to the advance on Tarawa, then to Hawaii for a short leave, and finally to Iwo Jima with the famous flag-raising scene on Mt. Suribachi. Although this screenplay by Harry Brown and James Edward Grant is overloaded with corn about war and fighters, it presents a vivid portrait of Marines in training and action and makes little attempt to romanticize or glorify war. The camera spares no details of war's horror. John Wayne's portrayal of the tough sergeant who whips these Marines into shape is excellent. Although you get to see quite a bit of the South Pacific, Director Alan Dwan's purpose is to pay tribute to the men who fought so well there and not to conduct a tour under palm trees.

"The Man on the Eiffel Tower" shows us the city of Paris in some beautiful color photography but fails to come through as an integrated movie. Actually this picture is a confused *tour de force*. It is extremely handsome to look at as the camera wanders through the city ostensibly watching a group of people who are under the surveillance of Inspector Maigret. The Inspector has cause to keep his eyes on a lot of people who might be involved in all these murders that are making too many people unsafe. But the effect of all this, with Charles Laughton, Franchot Tone and Burgess Meredith in the same picture, is like a series of actors trying to out-ham each other. Even the lovely girls involved (Patricia Roc, Jean Wallace, Belita) find the hamming contagious and get

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a little hysterical in their performances. This picture may make you giggle at the wrong places, but it won't bore you. Georges Simenon's story, "A Battle of Nerves," is absorbing and the photography is almost as good as a visit.

The French movie with English subtitles *"Angels of the Streets"* is of course complete with foreign atmosphere, but actually its plot is international. It tells a moving story about a group of nuns who visit prisons and help the women who are confined there. This help frequently extends to accepting these women into the convent after they have served their terms. Having a script written by Jean Giraudoux, Robert Bresson and Fr. R. L. Bruckberger, O.P., the film portrays the problems met by the nuns in their good work, and concentrates on a novice, whose background was not the street or prison, but whose pride seems to deter her in giving the real help she wants to extend. Nicely directed by Robert Bresson and beautifully photographed in a Dominican Convent, "Angels of the Streets" has an intensely sincere quality which takes it out of the Come-to-the-Stable group of films and makes it a study in motivation and inspiration. Because of its slow pace, extraordinary beauty and emotional theme, it is more like a visual poem than a movie. PHILIP T. HARTUNG.

Of Note

New Mode of Meditation

WRITING in the January *Orate Fratres* (Collegeville, Minn.) of the modern insistence upon "action and plenty of it," Father Peter Nearing of Canso, Nova Scotia, says that we have forgotten the primacy and necessity of contemplation. Meditation and the cultivation of an awareness of the presence of God are ordinarily private matters, but Father Nearing continues:

> The immediate purpose of this article, however, is not to advocate private meditation. It is to suggest something new in this field of spiritual life, something more in keeping with our times and trends, something that will help to solve our present problems.
>
> Within recent years we have become accustomed to the idea of the study club or discussion circle. We have seen how powerful an instrument for good it can be in helping people reconstruct their economic and social lives. We have heard how small groups of adults get together to do a little reading and much thinking and discussing, how they exchange knowledge and ideas, opinions and facts, until finally they arrive at conclusions and determine upon a program of action. And we have seen these small groups multiply, and their influence spread from one province to another, from one nation to another and even from one continent to a second and third. May we not ask then, if it has happened in economics, why can't it, by the grace of God, happen in religion?
>
> Is there any reason why small groups of Christians, men, women, boys, and girls could not come together once a week to read over some spiritual matter, to meditate upon it in silence for five or ten minutes, to discuss it for half an hour or so, and then to draw personal and group resolutions from their discussion?
>
> Imagine the influence a few such groups could have upon the parish. Living cells in the Mystical Body, informed by the Holy Spirit, living the life of the Church. What vitality they would give to the liturgical movement if the liturgy were made the subject of their prayerful thought and discussion. What life would flow from the long-forgotten writings of the Fathers when placed in their hands. What love for God would grow from groups like these. For group meditation would lead to private meditation; and where prayer abounds, sin finds it hard to stay.
>
> We have cried out against the Reformation as a destructive force in Western civilization. We have laid at its door each new ill that fell upon us. And the greatest of all these ills, we have told ourselves, was the spirit of individualism—individualism in economics and in religion. To combat that evil, to restore man to a sense of his social nature, to a consciousness of his corporate character, we have emphasized and developed the doctrine of the Mystical Body. Each and every Christian is being brought to a realization of his dependence upon and his value to every other Christian because of their common union in Christ. Meditation groups will serve to further that realization, for their members will experience, among other things, that hopeful promise, "Where two or more are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them." And God knows we need Him in the midst of us today.

The Eastern Church

THE Catholic Student Magazine *Today* (638 Deming Place, Chicago 14) publishes in its current issue an interview with the British writer and liturgist Mr. Donald Attwater. Part of the interview is concerned with the Eastern liturgy.

> . . . there are two types of Oriental Churches or Churches of the Eastern rite—the Orthodox Churches and those that we should call Catholic Churches of the Eastern rite. The Orthodox Churches were formerly Catholic, but separated from Rome about 500 years ago. The others, often called "uniate Churches," are in full accord with and under the jurisdiction of the Holy See. The members of the latter, however, should properly be called "Catholics of the Eastern rite." Says

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Mr. Attwater, "The term 'uniate' is a derogatory one, invented by opponents. It is like calling us Catholics of the Latin rite 'papists.'"

. . . in the Eastern rites (there are eight of them) the Mass is not said in Latin, but in languages including Slavonic and Greek or even in the vernacular—Rumanian, Hungarian or Arabic. Mr. Attwater says that "as a general rule, that makes the Mass much more intelligible to the people, because it is in a language they all understand."

We asked whether the principal parts of the Mass were not in Latin. Mr. Attwater answered that they are not, nor are the prayers of the consecration, for example, recited silently as ours are. The words of consecration, of course, are everywhere, in effect, the same, but in the Eastern rite they are chanted aloud in the language used at the Mass. Nor are the prayers of the Mass the same as ours. "Their prayers are more Scriptural and with more allusions to the Old Testament," says Mr. Attwater. "They do have a proper of the Mass, but it is not quite as extensive as ours and there is no introit, collect and the like."

On reading over the prayers of the Mass in the Byzantine rite, we were struck by their beauty, by their recurring petitions for peace. Great emphasis and ceremony surround the reading of the Gospel. The chanting of the beatitudes is another beautiful part of the Mass. And, in the Eastern rite, the catechumens are still dismissed after the introductory part of the Mass.

Holy Communion is received under both species —bread and wine—and the bread is leavened. The faithful receive standing, rather than kneeling. We asked Mr. Attwater whether Catholics of the Latin rite need special permission to attend Mass and receive Communion in the Eastern rite. "By no means," he answered. "We may fulfil our Sunday obligation in the Eastern rite, receive under both species and no special permission is required."

Donald Attwater is convinced that "we can learn a tremendous amount from the Catholics of the Eastern rite." We asked whether he thought that the people participate at Mass more completely than we do. Without hesitation, he answered, "I don't *think;* I *know*. The people know what is going on and, especially when Mass is said in the vernacular, understand every word that is said. And usually there is not a book to be seen. The sermon is also in their own language.

"Then, too, the people usually sing the Mass and are *fond* of singing. In fact, in the Eastern rite, there is nothing corresponding to our low Mass; the Mass is nearly always sung. Nor has the idea ever got to them that they can do anything else during Mass—say the rosary or read books or make the Stations of the Cross; there are not even any Stations in most Oriental Churches. Singing is still the normal way. . . ."

A Letter from Europe

Del Lederle

AFTER many months here, I'm just beginning to realize how deep Europe's despair is. France goes ahead, slowly re-building what was destroyed, but very few seem to have much enthusiasm for it. Sartre, if he has done anything, seems to have founded a philosophy which carries the present French attitude to its logical conclusion. The country is every bit as de-Christianized as Abbé Godin said it was. I spent a few days in Germany. There re-building was a lot more vigorous. But the Germans themselves fully expect everything to be knocked down again by the U. S. and Russia. The despairing French attitude was fresh in my mind, and I asked Germans I met why they were knocking themselves out if they were so sure it was all going to be smashed to bits. They said that one had to live wherever he was and that in their country today, just to keep alive required re-building. It seemed to me that there was a healthier spirit in Germany than in France. But the Germans are just as tired as the French. Bone tired, both of them.

America is new, full of hope; how full of hope you don't realize until you've spent some time in tired old Europe. But it seems the Holy Spirit is scattering His spark in the thick fog of European despair, and, believe me, the sparks are taking hold.

Last year I met several JEC (*Jeunesse Chrétienne Etudiants*: Young Christian Students). Through some French, Austrians and a couple of Americans I met over here, I got a thorough introduction to the JEC outlook. Later I ran across the JOC (workers) and the JAC (farmers). One evening I had dinner with the head of the farmers' movement, who was a student of Cardinal Suhard and a really dynamic (it is the only word for him) Christian.

Then there was the Mass celebrated by a worker-priest, Father Henri Perrin, the Jesuit who wrote *Priest-Workman in Germany*.

Bob Rambusch, a New Yorker, two Austrian girls and I were invited. It was a Sunday evening. We met in front of a third- or fourth-class Parisian bar and restaurant. We were led upstairs right away. There a few other people, all of them looking vaguely familiar to me, were waiting for us. Mass was to be offered in Father Perrin's small room in a cheap little hotel. I remember the awful wall paper especially—drab, dirty, rather sickly blue; you know the kind of place it was. The table in the corner of the room was already prepared for Mass. Father Perrin was vested, waiting to begin. Someone had placed one rose in a small vase on the altar.

DEL LEDERLE *is an American student studying in France. This is taken from a letter originally sent to Dr. Julia Metcalf of the Saint Thomas More Library in Los Angeles.*

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In time about twenty of us were packed into the tiny room. There was a commotion when the French missal couldn't be found. Father Perrin decided then that he would translate from the little Latin one as he went along. When we were all ready, standing around the altar, the Mass began. It was a dialogue Mass, in French. Father Perrin translated rapidly from the Latin, so the Mass was more or less in his own words. He would pause as a thought struck him, or maybe explain the meaning in more detail of a choice prayer. When it came time for the Offertory, we each chose our own host. A simple act, but by it the Offertory became a living thing for us. At the memento for the living the priest asked us if there were any intentions we had to add to his. The kiss of peace was passed around the room, from one to another.

If I try to tell you what this Mass meant to me, I wouldn't know where to find the words. I might make it sound like a soft, sentimental, sugary affair. But here were workers, ordinary workers, and they were bringing the doctrine of the Mystical Body to life in that dirty little hotel room. It was, I felt, an atmosphere of pure charity. The way the kiss of peace was given from one to another! And these people stood around the altar with real love and devotion; not the kind of devotion we call pious, but the devotion of a group ready to die for the community.

I tell you, these people *shared* their Mass. They offered it *together,* through their priest. They clearly saw the Christ in each other.

This community of theirs is really a parish within a parish. The ordinary parish in France had become so out of touch with reality that many workers had become completely pagan, and in many cases ardent, militant Communists. It was Cardinal Suhard who gave the final push to the movement which argued that if the worker wouldn't come to the Church, the Church would have to go to the worker. Father Perrin, since the war, has worked in several factories. Little by little he is forming a Christian community within a regular, organized parish. There are two kinds of Catholics in the parish—the naturally bourgeois and the small group of revolutionaries (if what happened at Jerusalem centuries ago can be called "revolutionary"). Father Perrin shepherds this second group. Together they form a community. Not long ago the community opened a bar in the neighborhood; now they have a small restaurant where the food served is wholesome but inexpensive. They do everything they can, spiritually and materially, for their *quartier,* their own little district. Best of all, of course, is the example they give. It is really startling. I know that in very few parishes, in France or elsewhere, would non-Christians say, "See how they love one another!" But, believe me, that is all anyone can think of around this group. "See how they love one another!"

★

THAT was Paris and Father Perrin's "parish." Then there is the German Benedictine Abbey at Maria Laach, with the new spirit given to it by Pius Parsch

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and Abbot Odo Cassel. I spent six days up there with a fellow American artist. We were invited as the Abbot's guests, and we were invited because we were interested in sacred art. The monks really put themselves out. They couldn't do enough for us, even going so far as to give us a whole course of lectures. We were artists, and that meant something at Maria Laach. Quite a contrast to America, where more than likely we would have been asked why we didn't go out and get a job like sensible people.

I was as profoundly impressed by the Sacred Dramas at Maria Laach as I was, in another way, of course, by the Mass at Father Perrin's. These monks *live* their liturgy. I will admit I expected something different from what I found. I think I was expecting a kind of Oxford Movement atmosphere. Good taste, especially in religious matters, can be overdone sometimes. Well, I got another shock. This, too, is a community—a truly Christ-centered community. The heart-beat of the community is in the morning Mass and in the *Opus Dei* throughout the day.

Fifty years ago the monks there decided that they were leading a fine life, even an edifying life, but that they just weren't Benedictines any more. They had the Mass and the Divine Office in church; but outside the church, well, outside there was another atmosphere, another spirit, and it wasn't right for them. The Abbot was the first to sense this. He brought it up in chapter, and soon all the monks were thinking about it. Then they began something that still goes on. It was, I think, something that only a group of German intellectuals would put its mind to. The monks started going back, back, back; poring over old manuscript in the library: the thoughts of the early Church; the writings of fifth and sixth century Benedictines. Slowly, from there they worked their way right up to the twentieth century. They've come up with stacks of good things, of course, but they've thrown stacks of things right out the window, too.

Here are some of the ideas I got from conversations with Father Albert Hammenstede, their Prior.

Much of the thought at Maria Laach is early Christian, hence very Oriental. For instance, they strive to make all their thinking Christocentric. This is the ideal they work toward. Of course they accept both the Humanity and the Divinity of Christ, but their accent is always on the Divinity.

Here are the chief ways they think of Christ:

1. *The Logos.* The Creator up to the Incarnation. The Ruler of the Cosmos. The Oriental idea, in contrast to the Western, is that man is happiest when he surrenders to the cosmic rhythm. There is in the West more of an emphasis on standing up and opposing the Cosmos. The Maria Laach monks accept the former view. They want to fit in with the rhythm and movement of nature. They are almost Eric Gill-ish about doing without machines, and they put great stress on cultivation as opposed to an artificial civilization.

2. *Christ the King.* Christ the Creator has left work for man to do. Man should work for Christ the King. All the work a Christian does should be a continuation of creation. The divine act of creation will come to an end only when the world itself ends. Man is a co-creator. Example: Take a block of wood. God put thousands of potentialities into it. It can be a chair, a table, a statue, etc. It is for man to decide which, and then to bring out the potentiality he has chosen.

Matter, though since the Fall it has lost some of its perfection, is still good, God-made. Christ said that when He was raised up He would draw *all things* to Himself. Everything He touched on earth was reblessed. And this blessing is continued by every Christian in the state of grace. The fact that Christ's body was glorified and thereby ours is, too, is the great triumph of the universe.

3. *The Savior and High Priest.* Thus is Christ adored in the Divine Office and the Liturgy. (The Maria Laach monks seem to use the word "Liturgy" for the Mass, as the Greeks do.)

4. *Glorified Christ, the Judge.* Christ as He will come to lead us into Heaven. He will lead men into His glory, the life He Himself is now living. This is the reason why His Divinity is accented, rather than His Humanity. He lived on earth and suffered, not for suffering's sake, but for glorification.

★

FATHER ALBERT was the first priest in modern times to say Mass facing the people. He compares the conventual Mass in the Abbey to the Greek *Mysterium*—but purely for the sake of the comparison. Detractors of the Abbey have said that they trace the Mass there back to the pagan Greek workship, which, of course, isn't true. But by the *Mysterium,* the Greeks, through prayer, songs and action, thought that they actually became the gods they were representing in a drama-like way. So, in the Mass, Christ is "made present." His death is made present for the community. The conventual Mass is the "passing of the Lord" for the Community. It is the one great sacrifice which will enable them to meet the small sacrifices required through the day.

The high altar at the Abbey is used only for this Mass and for the solemn Office. It is the holy of holies. The Canon of the Mass is the *Mysterium.* The priest offering Mass waits until after the *Sanctus* and the *Benedictus* are sung, then the Canon begins. Monks and laity are completely silent throughout. Then the bell in the tower starts to ring, telling the whole countryside that the moment of consecration has arrived. This silence, this deep, deep silence is much more impressive than any hymn or chant. It is like a positive, living thing, sweeping one up into the spirit of the Mass offered there.

I remember details. The way the priest incenses around the altar, for instance. So much incense is used that it billows up like clouds. You can see the smoke rising like a prayer, and it makes the sanctuary look unbelievably solemn. They use different lighting for different feasts. The vestments are more than appendices to ordinary clothing; not mere hangovers from another era that now have only a symbolic meaning. They are

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used. When the Priest for the solemn Office sits down in his cope, he wraps it around him. It is worn as a real cape. The monks of Maria Laach are not afraid to *use* things. They feel at home in the liturgy. The words "Sacred Drama" meant something to me there, for the first time in my life.

When the liturgy is actually used, when it is lived, it seems to burst out. These things are not cold, dead, dilettante affairs. These monks are not aesthetes. Liturgy for them is something alive; it is something almost gnawing in its intensity. The old dead symbolic actions, the mutterings and gestures—with them these things seem to have caught fire, like dry wood with sparks dropping on it. It is really amazing, breathtaking. I found it first in Father Perrin's hotel room, and then in Maria Laach's spacious church. What different paths to get to the same place!

Books

My Three Years in Moscow. Walter Bedell Smith. Lippincott. $3.75.

THE fact that the American Ambassador to the USSR from 1946 to 1949, General Walter Bedell Smith, can publish almost immediately upon his return his memoirs about his stay in Moscow is an impressive proof of the breakdown of traditional diplomacy in our time. For the General is very frank and outspoken in his judgments about the Soviet regime and its leaders. The State Department surely would not have permitted him to present these remarks to the public if there existed the slightest chance of reducing the American-Soviet tension by negotiations.

General Smith is an excellent writer and he has acquired a broad knowledge of Soviet life and Soviet politics by reading as well as by observation. True, he did not have too many opportunities to become intimately acquainted with life in the Soviet Union. The contacts with the Russians were quite scarce—Bedell Smith mentions that some officials whom he knew were later on arrested. His visits and travels were always official ones. He tells amusing stories about the efforts of his uninvited Soviet bodyguard—composed of members of the secret police —to follow him everywhere. But all this has not prevented him from writing a volume which will help many to grasp and to understand the basic features of Stalin's regime and its policies.

The regime appears in Bedell Smith's account as a totalitarian police state which tries to control the whole life both of individuals and groups. He correctly emphasizes that the Soviets' claim that they are in possession of a doctrine which is the absolute truth, forms the basis for their system. He points out the astonishing contradictions between official ideology and reality, contradictions

SPRING IS PHENOMENALLY EARLY

at Sheed & Ward this year—February looks like being the month when most of our new books come out.

SALVATION OF THE NATIONS by **Jean Danielou** ($2, February) is a good start for any Spring. The apostles, says the author, who so longed for our Lord's second coming, remembered, as we usually don't, that the whole world had to be converted first—a little job they hoped to accomplish in their own lifetime. True, there was more world than they knew, and complications developed that they didn't dream of, but still he feels that nearly two thousand years later we might well be a little embarrassed that it still isn't anywhere near done. . . . Like the Holy Father, he sees reunion of the Churches as the most urgent problem of our time, the only hope of combating Communism. It's an enlivening book.

Judging by the popularity of **Mr. Sheed's** translation of **THE CONFESSIONS OF ST. AUGUSTINE** ($3), putting spiritual classics into modern English is a good idea, so we've done it again. This time it's **THE IMITATION OF CHRIST** ($2.00, February) and the translation is by **Edgar Daplyn:** we found it less soothing than the old versions, much more evidently intended for us.

Special for the Holy Year is the revised, enlarged edition of **John Farrow's PAGEANT OF THE POPES** ($4.50, illus.). There's a lot to be said for seeing the papacy in perspective in this way—every Pope is here, from St. Peter to Pius XII, simple men and statesmen, saints and sinners.

Other February books are **Christopher Dawson's RELIGION AND THE RISE OF WESTERN CULTURE** ($3.75)—you know about this, and have probably ordered it already, it was held over from last Fall—**Henri de Lubac's DRAMA OF ATHEIST HUMANISM** ($4, illus.) about Feuerbach, Comte, Nietzsche and Dostoievsky, **POVERTY** by **P. R. Regamey, O.P.,** translated by **Rosemary Sheed** ($2.50) —a much-needed sorting out of just what Christian poverty is and how much hope there is of being poor in spirit without the other kind of poverty: something that doesn't worry most of us too much.

There are plenty more new books we want to tell you about, but no space to do it—never mind, if you get our **OWN TRUMPET,** you will see them all there, described at length: if you don't get it, send a card to **Lucy MacGill.** If you order books from us, send your order to her, too, to be sure of extra prompt service.

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which can only be evaded by isolating the Soviet masses from all knowledge and contact with the outside world. He is not blind to the technical-industrial achievements of the regime—he admits that lend-lease did not play the decisive role in the Soviet victories of World War II—but he emphasizes its limitations, that is, the lack of technicians, skilled foremen, etc., and the extraordinary sacrifices under which external progress was accomplished. The working of the terror and propaganda machinery is impressively analyzed. Everything is presented in a simple direct way, which will win many readers for the book.

★

GENERAL SMITH characterizes the foreign policy of the USSR as based upon a combination of Great Russian imperialism with the communist belief that the capitalist world is doomed. He is against any form of appeasement. He believes that only a systematic accumulation and organization of power by the United States and her friends can prevent the USSR from making attempts to further expansion or even from starting an aggressive war. He rejects the view that the USSR can make up quickly for its industrial backwardness, though he is aware of the strength of a totalitarian regime which can act swiftly and surprisingly and thereby overcome the awkwardness of its vast bureaucratic machinery.

The book is an impressive defense of the official American post-war policy, which is trying to contain the USSR after we realized that the Soviet leaders had taken an aggressive line. It must be noted that General Smith avoids certain controversial issues—he does not discuss the situation in the Far East, the conquest of China by the Communists; the word China does not appear in the index. He is also inclined to overestimate the success of the indoctrination of the Soviet masses, though it would be very dangerous to regard dissatisfaction among the inhabitants of the USSR as an important political factor. The whole regime is organized in such a way that the wishes of the masses cannot exercise any great influence. It is somewhat surprising that General Smith pays little attention to nationality problems in Stalin's multi-national empire. And finally, students of Russian history will not always accept the remarks on Russia's past and its influence on the present. But these are minor shortcomings. General Smith's book will deservedly exercise a great influence on a public eager to receive information on world affairs in our time. It is a human document which happily combines personal stories with interpretations of trends and institutions. WALDEMAR GURIAN.

Jonathan Edwards. Perry Miller. Sloane. $3.50.

JONATHAN EDWARDS lived chiefly in his mind rather than in the world, and so this account of him is centered on his ideas rather than on his life and times. In prospect such a book sounds intimidating, but Perry Miller has performed the feat of making intellectual

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biography exciting and of rendering intelligible to the modern reader the difficult thought of an eighteenth-century theologian. In the course of this volume a great name, more honored than read for several generations, takes on significance for twentieth-century Americans.

The author's enthusiasm for his subject is contagious and helps to explain his *tour de force*. Mr. Miller believes that Edwards was "one of America's five or six major artists, who happened to work with ideas instead of with poems or novels." He maintains that though Edwards spoke from "a primitive religious conception, yet at the same time he speaks from an insight into science and psychology so much ahead of his time that our own can hardly be said to have caught up with him." Prefiguring the fate of the artist in America, Edwards was forced into exile by the men of business, while after his time American civilization followed Franklin's way rather than his. Today, "when applied science and Benjamin Franklin's *The Way to Wealth* seem not a sufficient philosophy of national life," Edwards stands for another American tradition. Mr. Miller believes that "no American succeeded better, even though his experience was set within narrow limits, in generalizing his experience into the meaning of America."

The book is a masterly essay in synthesis. In ten brilliant chapters, punctuated by four brief sections of factual "external biography," Mr. Miller traces out the development of Edwards' thought, simplifying as far as possible his ideas and attitudes on such topics as Arminianism, revivalism, naturalism, the inherent and objective good, the will, and sin. His projected but uncompleted *summa*, "A Rational Account of the Main Doctrines of the Christian Religion Attempted," and his philosophy of history are given particularly stimulating treatment. Using not only Edwards' published works but also the mass of manuscripts at Yale, Mr. Miller has succeeded notably in his aim of giving Edwards' ideas "as full a hearing as the space permits or as the contemporary reader has time for." And in the process Edwards the man, who was not wholly a dehumanized intellect, is also more convincingly depicted than in the earlier conventional biographies.

Since systematic theology is virtually a lost art among Protestant Americans, as Mr. Miller remarks, it will be interesting to see whether this penetrating and sympathetic account of one of their great theologians wins a larger audience than that afforded by students of American literature. For Catholics Edwards has significance as a transitional figure, linked on one side with the tradition of the medieval schoolmen and on the other with Locke and Newton.

This volume sets a new high in the already distinguished level of the new American Men of Letters series.

MASON WADE.

Maurois Reader. Didier. $4.50.

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introduced by Mrs. Anne Fremantle, *The Silences of Colonel Bramble* struck me as being nearly as moving in English as it is in French; for the other novelettes and short stories, I cannot say, never having read the originals. So with the inevitable sea-change between original and translation in mind, this reader will attempt to produce an equitable review.

The impression throughout this collection of Maurois is one of fatty artificiality. There is none of the classic French *économie* of thought or portraiture or plot. Instead, a sleazy Gallic cinematic aura, Grade B, surrounds each piece. The plots of the short stories are too blatantly contrived. The whiff of stale Chanel and the acrid dregs of last night's *fin* greet the nostrils in a wave of bourgeois clamminess. The great game of *l'amour perdu* is played to the hilt, but with no distinction or difference. Compare, for example, the *Harpies on the Shore* with a few of the Hacquebaut-Costals letters in Montherlant's *Les Jeunes Filles*. Because Monsieur Maurois is pulling off a quick and clever trick does not excuse his glibness. True, he paints a very incisive picture of both wives and the "genius" writer, but it is a flashy turn, all in all, more effect than cause.

With relief and joy I re-read *The Silences of Colonel Bramble,* and here, certainly, Maurois redeems himself. Along with the subtle humor and kindly sensitivity, he shows an admirable and far-reaching understanding of the inscrutable Anglo-Saxon, not an easy feat for a Frenchman, or vice versa.

If, in his other tales, the author's sensibility was as well developed as his craftsmanship, there could be substituted in describing his writing, *le haut monde* for *le grand arriviste.*

ELIZABETH JOHNSON.

A Search for the King. Gore Vidal. Dutton. $3.00.

GORE VIDAL, a writer twenty-five years old, has had five novels published. Literary sheets have often described him as one of the most able of the young fiction writers, and his book, *The City and The Pillar,* prompted Christopher Isherwood to call it "one of the best novels of its kind yet published in America."

In this book, Mr. Vidal recreates the story of Blondel, the troubador to Richard the Lion-hearted, and his search for the brave king after his seizure by Duke Leopold. The travels of the singer, his encounters and escapes, his reflections on men and institutions, are the material of this story. Blondel seeks Richard on horse and on foot, in heat and in cold. He meets a giant, a zombie, a kind of were-wolf; he sees a companion ride a unicorn; he makes love unwillingly to an ugly woman, willingly to a beautiful one. Finally at Nottingham (Robin Hood lends his band to the Lion-heart at this place) he is re-united with Richard just before a great battle.

The author first discovered the story of Blondel "in the set called the Book of Knowledge" which he read in his grandfather's house. Perhaps he felt some association with the figure of the searching troubador. At any rate, he has written the story after re-reading it often and pondering it. Why he wrote it and why it was published is difficult to understand. The book is a trivial and pretentious thing which gives little evidence that the author has ability with words or images or rhythms. It is an elongated contrivance on which the writer has hung some inconsequential and condescending practice designs that are lacking in imagination and meaning.

Aside from some brief descriptions *A Search for the King* indicates an almost complete absence of taste and talent. The dialogue is ludicrous, the background uncertain, the observations immature. This book does not add anything to Vidal's reputation; it is a dismal performance which is superficial in motivation, shoddy in execution.

GEORGE MILES.

The Holy Year of Jubilee. Herbert Thurston, S. J. Newman. $4.25.

THE enterprising Newman Press at Westminster, Maryland has re-issued the excellent book Father Thurston prepared for the Holy Year of 1900. Father Thurston was one of the great English Jesuit scholars of his time. Always a precise and conscientious theologian, he said just about all that can be said about the Holy Year observance. He traces the history of the Holy Year from its beginnings in 1300, explains with great care the Catholic teaching on indulgences and then outlines the conditions for the Holy Year indulgences. All the traditional Holy Year ceremonies are painstakingly described and explained. The book runs to about 400 pages and is chock-full of information—theological, rubrical, archeological and historical. Best of the current Holy Year volumes.

• REVIEWERS •

WALDEMAR GURIAN is a professor of Political Science at the University of Notre Dame and the editor of *The Review of Politics.* He is the author of *Bolshevism, Theory and Practice.*

MASON WADE is an historian whose latest book is entitled *The Journals of Francis Parkman.*

ELIZABETH JOHNSON contributes to several reviews and is now writing a biography of Henry Stuart.

GEORGE MILES is a graduate of the University of Notre Dame.

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